

Deputy Mayor Report - Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Good afternoon, Mayor Holmes is away today.

At the end of May Councillor Barkwill and I travelled to Ottawa for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference – where more than 2000 mayors and councillors from across the country gathered to discuss local government matters.

The theme this year was *Stronger Together*. Following the recent federal election, the message was clear that we need to work together as communities, as provinces and as a nation if we want to tackle global uncertainties – particularly around tariff hikes by the United States.

We heard from Prime Minister Mark Carney who spoke about building more affordable homes, reducing Development Cost Charges (DCCs), creating national projects, and improving public safety. However, at the time of the conference, the newly elected Liberal government had not tabled its budget – so the Prime Minister did not provide details on what these initiatives would look like, or what this would mean for local governments.

We heard from Conservative Deputy Leader Melissa Lantsman who spoke about the high cost of living, reducing red tape, bringing down the cost of DCCs, bail reform and restoring consensus on immigration. While she was critical of the Liberals, she emphasized the need to work together on national sovereignty.

We also heard from NDP MP Gord Johns who argued for an increase in federal government infrastructure funding for local governments – specifically “more funds for recreation centres like pools.” And he warned that reducing Development Cost Charges (DCCs) can’t leave municipalities in the hole.

And, we heard from Green Party MP Elizabeth May who spoke about working together across all party platforms for the betterment of all Canadians.

In addition to speakers, we also participated in a variety of seminars and workshops including one on reducing red tape and improving government efficiency. The City of Kelowna is piloting a program that uses AI to help with resident inquiries. We heard about the challenges and opportunities they’ve had, and about how it’s critical that local governments have a plan before implementing any kind of AI.

I attended two seminars on rural infrastructure funding where I provided feedback on how federal government grants could be improved. This includes making funding programs predictable; reducing specific qualifications so that local governments can decide how to best spend the grant funding; and providing a timely response so that municipalities aren’t left hanging for months.

I also shared our frustrating experience of applying for a grant for a new recreation centre, and I asked for a clear definition of “rural” so that communities like Summerland aren’t left behind.

Unlike UBCM where municipal representatives meet with provincial ministers, FCM is structured differently. We get to participate in discussions with FCM representatives who lobby the federal government on our behalf.

From our region - the Southern Interior Local Government Association – the BC caucus elected Salmon Arm councillor Louise Wallace-Richmond to serve on the FCM board.

Overall, I found the conference to be informative and worthwhile. I learned how important it is that we work together and how I can count on others across the country to help.

While we are very diverse, I spoke with other councillors whose communities face many of the same issues and the need for coordination with the federal government is crucial. Our colleagues from BC and across the country shared creative solutions and demonstrated a commitment to serve their constituents in the best way they can. I also found a much-needed renewed sense of optimism, responsibility and pride in our country. Nation building starts at the local level.

I wanted to give a special thank you to our Member of Parliament, Dan Albas, for taking time to give me and Councillor Barkwill a fascinating tour of Parliament. My favourite part was walking down the halls with portraits of our past Prime Ministers – all uniquely painted to capture their time-period and personality.

Finally, back in Summerland, I participated in the Giant’s Head Run on June 7 – along with 600 others. It was so much fun to be among a sea of purple shirts. A huge thank you goes to the volunteers, staff, businesses sponsors and those who cheered for us along the route. It’s a great way to build community spirit and kick off the summer season.

Thank you.

Erin Trainer
Deputy Mayor